



Safety in Places of Public Gathering



Everyday, the routine of millions of people involves waking up, going to work or school, and taking part in social gatherings and events. Most of these are in the company of others with the same routine. On rare occasions the daily routine is suddenly interrupted by unexpected events. This may include natural disasters, large scale emergencies or protest. Chaos may ensue, property damage may result, people may be injured or killed, family members may be separated from one another.

Different large scale events and multiple places of gatherings come with a variety of risks. One may not be able to predict when a critical incident may occur, we would like to provide some tips to consider when entering public gathering spaces. Have a plan before attending large public events, assess the safety features at the location, identify entry and exits routes.

Be Prepared Be Aware

- Before attending a public gathering, be aware of surroundings and the people who may be present. If the event is an outdoor event, consider weather conditions
- Upon arrival assess your level of safety. Locate access and exit points – are there sufficient exit routes? Are there safety features/equipment that could be used in an emergency? Are systems in place to monitor and control large crowd activity? Does the venue accommodate the crowd that has gathered?
- Identify landmarks within and around the venue. If in a group, identify a meeting/muster place should the group become separated.

Additional tips for Parents/Guardians

- Children can be at greater risk when in large crowds. When children become separated from their families, confusion can leave them vulnerable. When arriving at the venue or event, familiarize children with where to go for help and who they should speak to.
- Young children may be unable to remember parents' telephone numbers, ensure children know how to contact parents if they get lost. Suggestions include having identification bracelets with the child's parents' cellular number(s) or making business cards with the child's parents names and contact numbers.
- Discourage children from going to a parking lot if they get separated—this is a dangerous area that leaves them at risk for abduction or injury. Instead, instruct them to stay where they are and you will find them. Or instruct them to seek help from a security officer or, alternately, another mother with children. These are the people most likely to quickly and responsibly assist your child.
- Avoid dressing children in clothing or a backpack that displays their name. Children are more likely to trust an adult who knows their first name. Instead, dress children in brightly colored clothing easily recognizable in a crowd. Take a picture of what the child is wearing to easily show to on-site security services if needed.

Be Aware of Crowd Dynamics

- Keep valuables safe. Large crowds are targets for pick-pockets or criminals to hide. Keep cell phones and wallets in a front pocket. Purses and packs should be closed and carried on one side. Avoid using ATMs in crowded areas to minimize risk of robbery or identity theft.
- Avoid crowds where there is surfing, stage diving and moshing activities.
- Be aware of suspicious, intoxicated or troublemaking people. Be alert of suspicious packages. Alert authorities if seen.
- Go with the flow of the crowd: – attempting to walk against the direction the crowd is walking in will result in resistance. People in the middle of a large crowd also move faster than those on the fringes of the gathering.
- If there is a sense of an impending stampedes, find cover to hide. Try to move sideways until finding a place with a lesser density of people or until you see an exit. If you fall down in a moving crowd, protect yourself by making yourself as small as possible, curling into a ball will help protect your face and internal organs.

In an Emergency

- Immediately respond to an alarm or signs of an emergency. Do not pause to gather unnecessary belongings.
- Do not panic. Do not play hero.
- Be aware of exits. Can exits be accessed without being exposed to greater danger? Get out and stay out. If there is smoke or fire, stay as close to the ground as possible. Avoid elevators and escalators. Get as far away from the emergency as possible, behind as much cover as possible. Avoid joining large groups or taking public transit in the immediate area.
- If it is not safe to run, seek cover and hide, making yourself a smaller target, do not move or make noise – silence phones. Wait for and follow the instructions of emergency responders.
- Help each other. Cooperating and working together may increase the chance of survival. Tell everyone you encounter while fleeing, to leave.
- For weather related emergencies, take shelter in a sturdy building. Avoid trees in open areas, hilltops, open fields or bodies of water.